DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 877 FL 025 377

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TITLE Professional Development of Teachers of Language Minority Students through University-School Partnership.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; College Faculty; *College School Cooperation; *Collegiality; Educational Strategies; Elementary Education; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; Institutional Cooperation; Interprofessional Relationship; *Language Minorities; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a project to implement a professional development program for teachers of language minority students in five urban elementary schools, in partnership with a university. The model involved: (1) providing a core group of volunteer primary grade teachers at each school with intensive training in an integrated reading/language arts approach; (2) maintaining regular contact among participating teachers throughout the school year as they worked toward implementing program elements in their classrooms; and (3) establishing collegial teams to serve as peer supports at each school site, allowing for sharing of expertise and resources. Year-end interviews with teachers revealed positive changes in collegiality, teaching practices, and professional growth. Additionally, changes in student behavior and learning were reported, including accelerated learning, gains in social skills, increased motivation for learning, and reduced need for retention or referral to special education. Naturally occurring problems that served as barriers to professional development are discussed. Contains 26 references. (Author/MSE)

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Professional Development of Teachers of Language Minority Students Through University-School Partnership

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Running Head: Professional Development

The research reported herein is supported in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education through a grant to the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education. The findings and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to implement, in partnership with a neighboring university, a professional development model in five inner city elementary schools featuring language minority populations. The model involved (a) providing a core group of volunteer primary grade teachers at each school with intensive training in an integrated reading/language arts approach, (b) maintaining regular contact with participating teachers throughout the school year as they worked toward implementing elements of the program in their classrooms, and (c) establishing collegial teams to serve as peer supports at each school site which allowed for sharing collective expertise and resources. Year-end interviews with teachers revealed positive changes in collegiality, teaching practices, and professional growth. Additionally, changes in student behavior and learning were reported as accelerated learning, gains in social skills, increased motivation for learning, and the lack of need for retention or referral to special education. Finally, naturally occurring problems which served as barriers to professional development were discussed.

Professional Development of Teachers of Language Minority Students Through University-School Partnership

Past failures to provide appropriate education for Latino language minority students have had adverse outcomes. A 40% drop out rate and failure to achieve basic literacy skills has left much of this population entrapped in a cycle of failure and poverty (Gersten & Woodward, 1994). In order to improve academic achievement and reduce the numbers of students dropping out, many educators have called for deep and wide ranging instructional and institutional reform (Ruiz, Rueda, Figueroa & Boothroyd, 1995; Cummins, 1989; Garcia, 1993). At present, the literature is replete with a myriad of initiatives to change the structures and cultures of schools (Cuban 1988; Wang, Oates, & Weishew,1995).

Often such reform has occurred by way of top down policy mandates with minimal training and no long term follow up support or feedback provided to classroom teachers (Ruiz, et. al., 1995). Under these conditions, few new programs and practices have shown replicable long term impact on students and few significant changes have occurred in classroom instruction (Guskey, 1986; Kirst 1991). Yet research indicates it is classroom instruction which is most in need of effective reform. Wang, Haertal, and Walberg (1993) examined 228 variables correlated with students' success in urban schools and found that proximal variables such as the amount and quality of teacher and student academic interactions exert the most influence on student learning, more so than policy and

organizational variables such as school restructuring, school-site management and tougher teacher credential requirements. The Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) emphasized that teacher expertise is the most important factor in student achievement as well. Nonetheless, research on teacher change shows that while some teachers see reform as an opportunity to modify instruction and classroom practices, the majority experience conflict and discomfort when asked to implement alternative teaching and learning paradigms (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

What then is needed to encourage teachers to take steps toward modifying classroom practices? Staff development in the form of one shot workshops has been mostly ineffective in promoting new teaching behaviors and confidence to initiate change (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Rather reformers have called for a more problem-based approach to teachers' learning that is built into teachers' ongoing work with colleagues. This includes providing opportunities for reflective thinking and engaging in collaborative inquiry to support the development of skills and confidence to teacher change (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Hamilton & Richardson, 1995). These approaches help teachers enhance their understanding of students' learning styles and needs, and their capacity to analyze what occurs in the classroom.

The availability of ongoing collegial support is a necessary component to meaningful and long lasting teacher change as noted by Showers and Joyce (1996), Darling-Hammond (1996), and others (Caccia, 1996; Raywid, 1993; Ruiz, et.al., 1995). Teachers

participating on peer-coaching teams, in particular, have been found to exhibit greater long-term retention of new strategies and more appropriate use of new teaching models over time (Baker & Showers, 1984). It seems that when opportunities are provided for teachers to dialogue with colleagues in an atmosphere that promotes trust and risk-taking over an extended period of time, increased classroom implementation of new teaching strategies and behaviors results.

Teachers' theories and beliefs about student learning need to be considered as well. Such focus is essential due to the stability of teachers' beliefs and their resistance to change (Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon, & Rothlein, 1994). Such beliefs can be especially damaging for language minority students when teacher expectations are low and learning environments are intellecutally limited with an emphasis on low-level literacy skills (Moll, 1992). Large scale studies involving teachers nationwide have found that changes in teachers' belief system occur when they can attribute growth in students' learning to changes in their classroom practices (Guskey, 1986).

Goodlad (1988) proposed that universities and schools work together in collaborative partnerships to develop the capacity for innovation and to create better learning environments for students. According to Goodlad, the benefit for such partnerships is that by combining and focusing resources to support a mutual concern, opportunities for real reform are increased. It seems reasonable that one such mutual goal is professional development which

benefits the school and students, and informs teacher education at the university. Presently, school-university partnerships are being established throughout the U.S. to address reform of both teacher and student education (Christensen, Epanchin, Harris, Rosselli, Smith, & Stoddard, 1996; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996).

This report presents composite data from five elementary schools where a professional development model focusing on language and literacy development was implemented in partnership with a neighboring university. School and university faculty worked together over a school year to provide primary teachers of language minority students (kindegarten through third grade) with opportunities (a) to design and implement innovative language-based curriculum and practices, and (b) to advance their knowledge, skills, and understanding of teaching and learning in ways that promoted change in instructional practices. In this article, we describe the implementation of the comprehensive professional development model for teachers of students at risk, and identify naturally occurring problems that served as barriers to implementation. Our interest was to investigate whether a comprehensive and collegial approach to professional development would result in increased adoption of teaching practices and behaviors which enhance literacy development in language minority students.

Procedures

Briefly, each school received a full year of ongoing university support for participating school faculty. The model

involved (a) providing intensive training and maintaining regular contact with a core group of volunteer primary grade teachers at each school and (b) establishing teams to serve as peer supports at the school site which allowed for sharing collective expertise and resources.

To begin, the authors, faculty members from a large urban teacher-preparation institution (one from Special Education and two from Curriculum and Instruction) approached 25 principals from neighboring urban elementary schools with an invitation to establish a university-school partnership. Our interest was to support primary grade teachers as they worked to develop skills for the enhancement of literacy achievement for language minority students. Literacy development was selected because it is a chief concern of school staff, and poor reading ability is the most frequent cause of referral to special education and Title I programs (Reynolds, Zetlin, & Wang, 1993). Five principals were receptive; 20 were either involved with other reform efforts or felt faculty would not be interested in participating.

Meetings were arranged at each of the five schools and all primary teachers were invited to attend. At each meeting, the three faculty members led a discussion focusing on achievement patterns which concerned school staff: that large numbers of students, especially primary grade students, were functioning well below national norms in reading; that most of the least adequately performing students were not enrolled in special education nor any other program that provided intensive instruction addressing

academic deficiencies; and that many of the lowest scoring limited English proficient (LEP) students were not receiving adequate language development support.

We then invited teachers to participate in the project where they would work collaboratively to design, plan, and implement a comprehensive language arts program--a language-rich developmental program which focuses on process and integrates oral language with reading and writing through center-based learning. This approach to literacy development is based on research which suggests that providing low income children in particular, with multiple opportunities to hear, explore and talk about literature during their early school years is beneficial and allows them to maintain growth and language development consonant with their more privileged peers (Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Freppon, 1995).

The proposed plan of action, employing principles of effective staff development (Hamilton & Richardson, 1995), contained the following components:

o approximately 10 hours of professional development to develop awareness of (a) the theories underlying a developmental, integrated language arts approach and (b) effective instructional practices for implementation of a comprehensive language arts program

o visitations to other school sites where model developmental primary programs are successfully operating

o transformation of participating classrooms into demonstration sites at each school so teachers could alternate weekly meetings to observe and discuss new strategies, curricula and technologies being integrated into their instructional programs. Weekly meetings would (a) include demonstration lessons by university faculty of teacher-requested topics (i.e, how to do an integrated reading lesson, how to do individual writing conferencing, how to monitor growth in writing samples); and (b) serve as a mechanism for substantive collegial interaction where teachers could share

issues, concerns, and ideas as they proceeded with changes in their instructional practices.

o development of peer teams as collegial supports to facilitate integrating new knowledge, behaviors, and materials into their daily teaching repertoires and to share knowledge and resources of comprehensive language arts program with other teachers at their school sites.

o ongoing mentoring support of peer teams by university faculty to support implementation of the elements of the comprehensive language arts program into classroom routines

All five schools were located in a large urban school district in Southern California. The schools were comprised of largely Latino populations (of which more than 80 percent were Mexican-American), with many students from first generation, non-English speaking families. Most students were living at or below poverty level and experienced all of the associate deprivation and stresses in health care, nutrition, poor housing and unsafe neighborhood. Table 1 presents basic demographic information for each school.

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insert Table 1 here

A total of 25 primary teachers agreed to participate. This represented approximately one fourth of the primary teaching staff at each of the five schools (Valley, 7; Mountain, 5; Plains, 5; Hill, 4; Vista, 4). Participating teachers averaged 13.1 years of classroom teaching experience with a range from 6 to 29 years (sd = 6.5 years). All participants were fully credentialed teachers; 8 instructed students in English, 13 in Spanish bilingual classrooms (see Table 2). Another 6 teachers had indicated interest in participating but chose to withdraw within the first few weeks. Their reasons for leaving included: too much other

work, preference for the status quo, frustration over difficulty imple-menting program changes, fear of losing autonomy (discomfort with collaboration), and skepticism of effectiveness of program components.

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insert Table 2 here

Interested primary faculty were given release time by their principals (a) to visit a school featuring model developmental primary classrooms and center-based instruction (where students work at their own level), and (b) to attend the ten hours of professional development. The professional development was conducted for each school by university faculty (the authors) and focused on developing knowledge and skills for integrating Robbins' (1990) 10 instructional elements into their comprehensive language arts program (see Table 3). The training was held at either the school or university, and was conducted at the start of each school's new year. For two schools on year round schedules, the training was conducted during the summer, and for three schools on traditional calendars, the training was held in the early fall.

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insert Table 3 here

At the conclusion of the training, interested teachers were paired with a teammate based on same or sequential grade level and language of instruction. Faculty arranged to meet individually with each team to facilitate and support their classroom reorganization. During this before or after school session which

lasted from one to three hours, teachers and faculty rearranged furniture and created center-based learning environments in each classroom to encourage implementation of the 10 instructional elements. Decisions about where to place desks and materials were made collaboratively and involved much discussion about the benefits/disadvantages of various arrangements.

Professional development meetings were held weekly at each school throughout the school year (during lunch or after school) and alternated between demonstration classrooms. Teachers organized the agenda for the meetings and a faculty member always attended to participate in discussions. The purpose of these meetings were twofold: (1) for teachers and faculty to observe and discuss new strategies and curricula being implemented in each of the classrooms, and (2) to resolve problems in implementation as they arose.

Teachers implemented elements of the program at their own pace and comfort level (see Table 4). This appeared to lessen their resistance. Some teachers were quicker than others to make changes and pilot new practices; some school cultures were more supportive of the teacher change process than others. All teachers began with literacy centers which offered a variety of reading and writing activities. Included were thematic cycles featuring meaningful literacy events, activities which built on children's background knowledge, and language learning activities that emphasized problem solving in real world situations of interest to the students. Within weeks of the training, reading aloud, sustained silent

reading, and shared book experiences had become a part of the daily routine. Within the first six months, most classrooms had introduced guided reading and daily individualized conferencing in writing with either the teacher assistants or classroom teacher. Some teachers had begun flexible grouping of students within centers to nurture peers assisting each other's performance. In all the classrooms, children' literature became the basis from which many reading, writing and English-language (ESL) lessons flowed (i.e., theme-oriented puppet shows, readers' theater, poetry and choral readings). By the second semester, some classrooms began integrating other content areas into activity centers and were devoting increased amounts of time to reading and writing (i.e., science, social studies, geography).

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insert Table 4 here

Results

Both quantitative and qualitative data sources were used to examine changes in professional behavior and student growth. Informal rating scales which were completed by project teachers and faculty were submitted to t-test and correlational analyses to assess perceived changes in teaching practices and effectiveness. Fieldnotes and interviews were submitted to content analysis to reveal in what ways teacher behavior was affected, what impact professional development had on student achievement, and what barriers impeded the professional development process.

Quantitative Data

To measure changes in teachers' instructional practices, all participating teachers completed "The Observational Guide to Develop an Integrated Reading/Language Arts Program" (Vogt, 1991) at the start of involvement (T_1) and then again at the end of the school year (T_2). The informal measure required teachers to rate on a 5 point scale, the frequency in which they use integrated reading/language arts instructional practices in four areas, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The 49 items which comprise the guide were derived from current research and practice and allowed for a maximum score of 245. A t-test for nonindependent samples revealed significant gains for the teachers from T_1 to T_2, $t(24) = 2.92$, $p<.01$.

At T_2, teachers were also asked to rate their overall teaching effectiveness with language minority students. Using a 5 point scale from 1 (indicating not at all effective) to 5 (indicating extremely effective), the mean rating was 3.82 (SD=.7). Using the same measure, the three faculty members rated each teacher's effectiveness. Faculty ratings were made by consensus and involved discussion based on written notes and observations. The correlation between teacher ratings and faculty ratings was statistically signficant ($r=.49$, $p<.01$).

Qualitative Data

From detailed field notes written by faculty members throughout the year documenting interactions with and observations of project teachers, Table 4 was constructed which depicts when teachers began implementing the elements of the comprehensive

language program. Over two-thirds of the teachers had incorporated at least five elements of the program within the first 6 months. By the end of the school year, all 25 teachers were implementing between 4 to 10 elements. The most challenging components for teachers to embrace were individualized reading and content area integration within learning centers. Teachers indicated large class size, limited planning time, and dealing with other program elements as explanations for why these elements were not yet a part of their program.

At the end of the school year, open ended interviews were conducted with project teachers and they were asked to reflect on noticeable changes in their langauge arts teaching effectiveness and student achievement. The three faculty members (the authors) conducted the interviews so formal training was not deemed necessary. All responses were recorded verbatim. These data, in combination with fieldnotes, were submitted to established content analysis techniques (Johnson & LaMontagne, 1993). This procedure involved the first and second authors independently "cycling through" the various sources of written data and coding all relevant responses into tentative categories. All data units were then sorted into these initial categories and the two researchers met to compare notes. If there were disagreements regarding the coding of any data unit, it was discussed until concensus was reached. Next they refined the categories by combining and expanding related categories until all data units fit into one of three emergent themes: professional behavior, student performance,

and barriers to professional development. To ensure trustworthiness of the themes and subcategories, 10% of the data units were randomly selected and coded by the third faculty member yielding 93% interrated agreement. Each theme and its related properties are described in detail below.

Three subcategories of professional behavior were identified: collegiality, teaching practices, and professional growth.

Collegiality. Teachers emphasized the increase in collegial interaction and formation of peer teams, specifically the development of relationships with other teachers who provided support for their change efforts. One teacher noted the general lack of collegiality at her school and credited the project for the exchange and sharing between her and another project teacher. A kindergarten teacher, who had felt confined in previous years, was elated with his colleague who shared a willingness to implement new ideas, "I have a room partner who cooperated totally and we were allowed to do a complete whole language, thematic, center-based classroom."

Teaching Practices. Teachers specified the changes they had made in curricula focus and instructional activities, and the observable effects of these changes on student achievement and motivation. Teachers described increased amounts of time devoted to individualized reading and writing due to the shift to center-based activities. They described students enjoying instruction and taking responsibility for learning. One first grade teacher stated, "We write daily.... They're able to write stories or

paragraphs that flow. I see a train of thought. I see them expressing themselves better. And the writing contributes to the reading and so they can read better." A kindergarten teacher reported, "We have been reading a lot more to the students and in turn I've noticed that they have become readers on their own...They have since enjoyed the library area more, and when I hear them read out loud they dramatize the story and enjoy listening to other students read."

Professional Growth. Teachers noted advances in their understanding of learning processes as well as a growing awareness of a variety of approaches and materials for language arts instruction. One 1st/2nd grade teacher stated, "I feel as if I have really begun to understand the reasons behind these processes. Now I have a better understanding of the whole picture. I am doing better planning of whole group cooperative projects and tasks." A 2nd/3rd grade teacher explained how "seeing the individual writing program in action during a visit to (Valley) school and hearing about it in the meetings we had" helped him to make changes in his language arts program to which he attributes the astounding progress his students made this year.

Four subcategories reflected observable changes in student behavior and learning: accelerated learning, gains in social skills, increased motivation for learning, and the reduced need for retention or special education services. Students' progress in all these areas were attributed to changes made by teachers in their instructional program, especially the individual writing

conferencing and the center-based environment.

Accelerated learning. Students who entered classrooms with few skills and significantly behind peers, appeared to substantially benefit from the individual conferencing in the writing and reading centers and showed tremendous growth. A 1st/2nd grade teacher stated, "I was able to spend more individual time with my student...He was helped according to his specific needs and was able to make progress at his own pace." A 3rd grade teacher told about a student who initially read at the 1st grade level and had very low writing skills. "In the writing center he found he started doing better, that he could read and write. He started writing. Over the year, he went from a 1st to 3rd grade reading level, a two year gain. Now he's writing, and he feels more confident. He feels very useful. The individual conferencing he appreciates. Its a better way of communicating. The students let you know exactly what they want to learn. Its totally individualistic."

Motivation. Students who were reluctant to read or write in the beginning of the year due to very low skills, became "enthusiastic regulars" in the writing and library centers once they began experiencing success. "Jessica (1st grader) wasn't crazy about writing at first. After doing centers for a couple of weeks, she started to write a little more. Soon after, she would ask if she could come back to the writing center. Although she had a choice of other attractive centers, she continued to come back to the writing center. Her writing improved a lot." Another teacher

expressed, "I think Stefan was kind of surprised that he was doing as well as he was, but he was just so enthusiastic, he was happy all the time. And during language arts time, he would love to come up and write. He did some great writing. He was pleased but I think he was kind of surprised at his progress too."

Social Skills. Students gained confidence, developed skills for relating to peers, and really blossomed as leaders in the center-based environment. A 2nd/3rd grade teacher stated, "I think the program helped bring out some of Sergio's leadership skills and abilities when working in the groups. I could see him every once in a while, kind of take the lead of the new group of students who were working on the project and help some of the kids through, whereas I don't think that would have happened before in a more structured environment. So I think that helped bring up his self-esteem too." A kindergarten teacher described changes in a student who had difficulty relating to her peers. From exposure to "storytelling and reading aloud," she began "retelling" stories in the library center and "almost always has an attentive group around her. The children are captivated by her retelling stories and her relationship with her peers has improved."

Retention/Referrals to Special Education. Teachers noted that students who exhibited the kinds of behaviors that would have led to retention or referral to special education in previous years, seemed to thrive in the restructured classrooms. Four kindergarten teachers insisted that the center structure allowed their easily distractable students to learn and prosper. Although these

students moved quickly from center to center, the theme cycles integrated lessons throughout the different centers and produced more in depth understanding of concepts and maximum development of skills necessary for promotion. A 1st/2nd grade teacher reported, "Last year I wasn't sure if I should retain one of my students. This year, I let her continue as a 2nd grader. I provided a lot of writing experiences, a lot of literature. Now she is ready for 3rd grade. She has a lot of confidence and loves to read and write

Four subcategories of barriers to professional development were encountered as teachers and university faculty worked to promote changes in classrooms and enhance student outcomes.

District Barriers: (a) there was an unstable school calendar which affected teacher "rhythms and energy" as the district vacillated between requiring all schools to switch from a traditional 10 month calendar to a year-round calendar and then allowing some schools/communities to vote to return to the traditional calendar the following year; (b) there were "climate" tensions between the teachers' union and school district due to difficult contract talks which ended with a 10% salary reduction and a reluctance by teachers to stay after school for meetings or training; and (c) the contract settlement which allowed teachers to "self-select" which grade they would teach the following school year based on seniority in the district, gave no consideration to the integrity of ongoing innovative programs or teacher participation in those programs.

School Barriers: (a) the reassignment of administrators to new

schools resulted in the temporary disruption in coordination between project schools and the university (i.e., three assistant principals in three project schools were transferred midyear); (b) a schoolwide class roster reorganization 20 days into the school year to equalize class size resulted in some teacher and student reassignments to new classes and grades without any consideration for participation in the project; (c) the continuous enrollment of new students into demonstration classrooms throughout the school year required teacher time to orient new students to routines as well as assess their skill levels; and (d) past frustrations with implementing "innovative school reforms" resulted in teacher reluctance (by the majority of teachers) to participate in what they perceived as "another" project.

Process Barriers: (a) limited administrative participation in training due to busy schedules resulted in a lack of understanding of and support for program and teacher needs (i.e., lack of instrumental support in terms of greater stability of class roster, more planning time, financial support for supplies/materials, scheduling flexibility); (b) lack of opportunity to train classroom aides limited their participation in the individualized reading and writing centers; (c) other innovative programs being implemented in the schools inadvertently competed for instructional time, contributed to program fragmentation, and were sometimes at odds philosophically (i.e., the basic skills "IBM Writing to Read" computer program which primary classes participated in and the developmental integrated language arts program); and (d) fear of

negatively impacting achievement test scores, and resistance to acknowledging the ineffectiveness of "old habits" (i.e., to discard long held beliefs about control and classroom organization) slowed the adoption of new instructional practices by some project teachers.

University Barriers: (a) faculty members had to struggle to establish a role for themselves as partner/collaborator with teachers who expected them to function as "experts" and be more directive; (b) because of other university obligations, faculty had limited time to divide across 5 school campuses and 25 teachers--they felt overcommitted as they rushed to attend weekly meetings and observe teachers individually at each school; and (b) university administrators narrowly viewed the university-school partnership as a grant-supported project and provided no additional support in terms of release time or financial resources to strengthen faculty members' capacity to work in the schools.

Discussion

The problems that schools face meeting the needs of language minority students are well documented. All agree that many language minority students need better help than they now are receiving. Schools must chart a course to develop the best classroom environments possible in which teachers and students successfully function in a productive atmosphere. The flexible, individualized approach to professional development described in this report provides teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to understand how language minority students learn and how to

create opportunities to produce language and literacy achievement.

Limitations. No case is made for the five schools included in this study being a representative sample. However, the process of teacher change as described in these schools reveals at least some of the dynamics of professional development as teachers strive to develop skills and confidence for promoting language and literacy development within the context of challenging environments. The generalizability of the data are further limited by the lack of a true experimental design (i.e., control group, random selection of project teachers) and reliance on rating scales to assess teachers' perceptions which have not established reliability. Nonetheless, patterns were revealed in both the qualitative and quantitative data sets which have broad implications for teacher education and professional development. Involvement in this comprehensive professional development model over an extended period of time gave participating teachers an opportunity to practice new ideas with collegial support, and to increase knowledge regarding teaching, curriculum and learning. The individualized nature of this approach helped overcome teacher resistance and offered ongoing support to teachers who differed in their predispositions and readiness for change. Over the course of a school year, teachers developed the skills and confidence to increase classroom implementation of new teaching strategies and behaviors. At their own pace and with collegial support, they created exciting learning communities for students which featured literacy-rich individualized instruction to support variations in learning. As

teachers perceived gains in student learning and motivation, their change efforts were reinforced.

The university's role as catalyst provided the supportive infrastructure for teacher change to occur and led to benefits for the university as well. Faculty members underwent changes which they documented in fieldnotes as they transformed their role from traditional "expert" to collaborator/partner. Faculty members gained by increasing their understanding and knowledge of "real world" problems facing teachers in today's classrooms. This enhanced their own teaching of preservice teachers as well as led to greater integration of the university's mission to train teachers and the "real world" need to support classroom reform.

Barriers to implementation occurred at all levels. Although neither the district nor individual schools intentionally sought to undermine the teacher change initiative, nonetheless, very real distal problems--salary cutbacks, continuous enrollment, administrative unavailability--served as deterrents to an already challenging process of reform. University barriers too, specifically lack of committment/support in terms of time and resources impeded efforts by faculty members. Efforts to address or circumvent such barriers divert attention from the real issue of "reaching students whose chances for school success depend substantially on the quality of schooling itself" (Pugach, & Seidl, 1995, p.384). Until we are willing to confront such obstacles broadly to preserve the integrity of the reform effort, the possibility of maximizing student learning and supporting the

growth of practicing teachers will continue to be severely limited.

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Table 1

Demographic Information for Five Project Schools

	total popu	Latino	Anglo	Asian	Afr-Am	Free/Red lunch	Chap 1	LEP	GATE
Plains	1776	98.0%	.5%	.3%	1.0%	93%	99%	78%	46
Hill	1076	95.0%	.4%	1.4%	3.0%	97%	85%	69%	40
Valley	1019	98.5%	.3%	1.0%	.4%	94%	64%	70%	18
Vista	803	98.0%	.5%	1.0%	.5%	88%	65%	62%	31
Mountain	893	95.0%	0	4.0%	1.0%	96%	69%	71%	29

Table 2

Teacher and Class Demographics[1]

School	Teacher Ethnicity	Grade Level	Language of Instruction
Valley School	White	K-1	English
	Latina	K	Spanish
	Asian	1-2	English
	Latina	1-2	Spanish
	Latina	2	Spanish
	Latina	3	Spanish
	Latino	3	Spanish
Mountain School	Latina	K	Spanish
	Latina	K	Spanish
	Latino	1	Spanish
	White	1-2	English
	Asian	2	English
Plains School	White	K	English
	White	K	Spanish
	Latina	1	Spanish
	White	2	English
	White	2	Spanish
Hill School	White	1-2	English
	White	1-2	English
	White	1-2	Spanish
	Latina	1-2	Spanish
Vista School	Latina	K	Spanish
	White	K	Spanish
	Latina	1	Spanish
	White	2	Spanish

[1] class sizes fluctuated from 26 to 31 throughout the school year

Table 3

10 Elements of a Comprehensive Reading/Language Arts Program

1. **READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN** - teacher reads aloud to encourage children to read on their own; CORE (classic/core literature integral to our culture) and EXTENDED reading selections (other similar high quality literature) are used

2. **SHARED BOOK EXPERIENCE** - cooperative language activities in which teacher reads and rereads rhymes, engages children through storytelling and encourages creative dramatics; fingerplays, rhymes, songs, poems, skits, and stories are used

3. **LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE** - children's oral language is recorded by teacher, aide, or volunteer parent or student from an upper grade and made available to children in written format; children's own firsthand or vicarious experiences are used

4. **SUSTAINED SILENT READING AND WRITING**[1] - everyone, including teacher, "reads" and/or "writes" for a designated period of time; also known as: D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Read), S.S.R. (Sustained Silent Reading), U.S.S.R. (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading); SQUIRT (Super Quiet Uninterrupted Reading Time); DIALOGUE JOURNALS

5. **GUIDED READING** - small, flexible grouping of students allows teachers to assign books/stories to be read independently. These reading sessions are followed by reading conferences which focus on higher order thinking and reading/grammar mini-lessons related to the context of the selection; also uses quality CORE and EXTENDED reading selections. All 5 decoding strategies are emphasized as appropriate:
   1. sight words: building sight vocabulary through literature, environmental print, language experience, etc.
   2. context clues: teaching students to make "educated guesses" based upon paying attention to the context of the story, pictures
   3. phonics: "synthetic"- synthetically blending sounds together
      "analytic" - pattern recognition of sound/symbol relationships
      "applied" - learning phonics by doing phonics; writing developmentally with invented spellings
   4. structural analysis: based upon function of word in the sentence; based upon the structure of the word (prefixes and suffixes, accents, inflectional endings, compound words, contractions, syllabications)
   5. dictionary resources: looking it up as a last resort

6. **INDIVIDUALIZED READING** - recreational/motivational reading of children's literature selections at home or during free time in school; includes programs such as "BOOK IT" (the Pizza Hut program), School Goals (providing rewards for students who read the most number of minutes)

7. **MODELED WRITING** - teacher models the process of writing; children see and hear the thinking processes an "expert" writer uses as he/she writes

8. **CHILDREN'S WRITING** - using the writing process approach including conferencing
   1. prewriting: student chooses his/her topic, draws a picture, brainstorms, researches, clusters, or word webs ideas before beginning to write the story
   2. first draft: concentrates on getting ideas down, not interrupting the flow over mechanics or correct wording at this time
   3. revising: rereads story along with a friend and improves it to make it sound better
   4. proofreading: fixes a manageable amount of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or other mechanical mistakes, leaving other types of mistakes for future learning times
   5. publishing (only when appropriate): or stamped "2nd Draft" (the busy work of recopying is avoided since it wastes valuable learning time unless there is a legitimate, "real world" reason for doing so)

9. **OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARING** (Reading and Writing) - finished work is presented to an audience "advertising" books they have read and books they have written; includes author's chair, publishing student books, bulletin board displays, book talks, various "real world" uses

10. **CONTENT AREA INTEGRATION/FOLLOW-THROUGH** - students continue to reinforce reading/writing skills throughout the curriculum in learning centers which include activities structured around the theme cycles they are studying and where students' choice is encouraged in activity selection, order, and duration

[1] with Kindergarten, First, and Second grades, these times are not intended to be "quiet"

Source: Adapted from Robbins (1990)

Table 4

Implementation of 10 Elements of a Comprehensive Reading/Language Arts Program[1]

	implemented within 1-6 months	implemented within 7-12 months	not implemented within year one
Reading Aloud	25	0	0
SSR/SSW	20	5	0
Shared Book Experience	20	3	2
Guided Reading	18	7	0
Modeled Writing	17	5	3
Language Experience	12	8	5
Opportunity to Share	12	7	6
Children's Writing	9	12	4
Content Area Integration	12	5	8
Individualized Reading	1	3	21

[1] number of teachers implementing practice within first 6 months, last 6 months, or not at all during year one

Appendix

Teacher Interview

1. What types of children do you feel are at high risk for school failure?

2. What forces and conditions contribute to or create high risk problems among your students?

3. What kinds of learning opportunities seem to help your high risk students most?

4. What changes do you believe are needed in schools/classrooms to support effective instruction for high risk students?

5. Please rate your professional strength as a teacher of high risk students:

1	2	3	4	5
not at all effective				extremely effective

6. Have there been any noticeable changes in your langauge arts teaching effectiveness this year? If yes, what do you think accounted for these changes? If no, why not?

7. Please describe how the comprehensive language arts program was particularly effective for your students? What elements were less effective than others?